

# A "How To" Guide: Build a Peer Nutrition Education Program from Scratch to Encourage Diversity and Inclusion

Ashley Lepe, BS; Chris Balam, MS, CSCS; Suzanne Elizondo, MS, RDN, NBC-HWC; Kathryn Hillstrom, EdD, MPH, RDN  
An MOU between the Recreation Department and the School of Kinesiology, Nutritional Science, Food Science  
California State University, Los Angeles

## Objectives

Through a Zoom-based, peer nutrition education program, dietetics students can prepare to become nutrition professionals that effectively serve diverse people in diverse communities with inclusivity and cultural awareness. The program is called GENE, the Golden Eagle Nutrition Education program.  
(The Golden Eagle is the university's mascot)

### Our poster objectives include:

- **Discovering why** a large, urban university with a diverse student body is an excellent place to improve diversity in the dietetics field
- **Providing an overview of the critical steps** in planning and implementing a co-curricular peer nutrition education program
- **Reviewing activities and resource materials** to support inclusion and cultural awareness with peer coaching
- **Summarizing the possible challenges** when starting a new program and listing next steps to assess and improve program outcomes

## Our Big WHY

### Four big reasons drove the creation of GENE, the peer nutrition education program:

- Under new leadership, the Recreation Department at Cal State LA, a large, urban university in central Los Angeles County, desired to **expand wellness activities** that supported the university's mission to enhance the campus community experience through play, wellness, and meaningful connection
- The Nutrition Program desired to expand opportunities for **dietetics students to build career readiness and competitive skills** while encouraging diverse voices
- **No Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN) are currently employed on campus** to provide guidance and support to the campus community
- The pandemic minimized opportunities to **connect and create supportive spaces** for university community members. Needed a way to bridge the gap

## One Problem with Diversity in Dietetics

### "Health professionals must look like the people they serve"

A quote from Lucille Beseler, past president of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND), 2016

Race/ethnicity	Dietetic professionals	Cal State LA dietetic students	Los Angeles County population
White	80%	16%	26%
Hispanic/Latino	6%	46%	49%
Black	3%	5%	9%
Asian	5%	24%	15%
Other/Non-specified	6%	9%	1%

**Percentage of dietetic professionals compared to Cal State LA dietetic students and the population of Los Angeles County by race and ethnicity.**

Data obtained from the 2020 Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Needs Satisfaction Survey, 2021 Cal State LA Office of Instructional Effectiveness website, and 2021 U.S. Census Quick Facts.

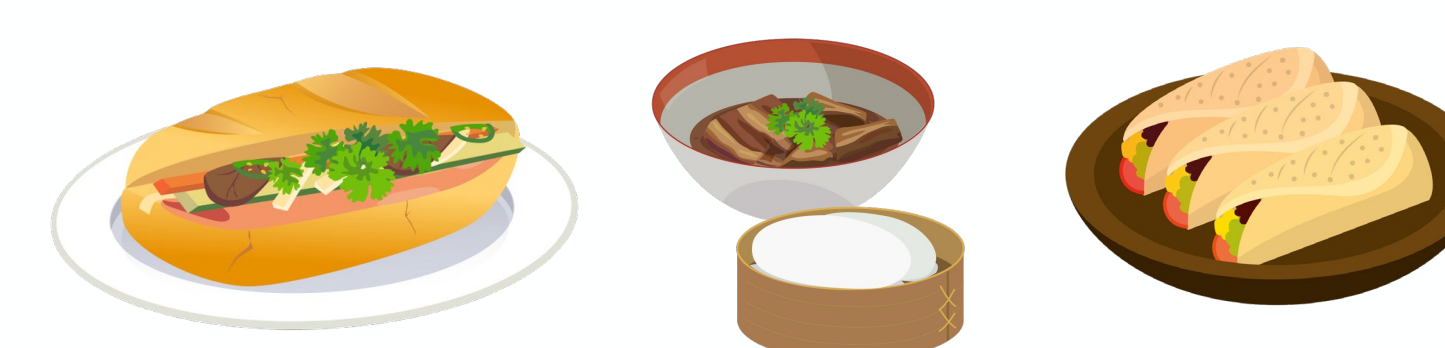
## Ideas for Encouraging Diversity in Dietetics

**The GENE program sought to improve diversity and inclusion by:**

- **Building cultural awareness** through student interactions on Zoom by talking about food choices and family traditions
- Encouraging cultural exploration through client case studies, resource development and promotional activities
- **Addressing cultural barriers** to nutrition counseling in class discussions
- **Exploring resources** such as AND's Member Interest Groups, the non-profit organization, Diversify Dietetics, and diverse RDN blogs, social media channels and podcasts
- Promoting a **non-diet, body inclusive approach in sessions**
- **Offering diverse perspectives for coaching** by requiring sophomore dietetics students to schedule at least four sessions

*"I learned to be mindful of the differences between my values and those of the clients. Embracing these differences led to conversations supporting change."*

A quote from a Golden Eagle Nutrition Educator, 2021



## Completed Nutrition Education Sessions by Semester

**Total number of 30-minute, Zoom GENE sessions completed in 16-week semester**



Fall 2020

62

Spring 2021

251

Fall 2021

301

Spring 2022

123

Sessions declined in Spring 2022 because of less assigned sessions to GENE educators and less enrolled GENE educators

## Steps to Develop a Peer Nutrition Education Program

**Step 1:** Facilitate benchmarking for academic framework and administrative systems and tasks

**Step 2:** Develop program infrastructure by developing a MOU and creating course content and session processes

**Step 3:** Create communication and outreach strategies to build collaborative partnerships and develop promotional activities and resources

**Step 4:** Review outcomes and observations by collecting qualitative and quantitative data. Continually hone course and administrative processes

**Step 5:** Determine next steps to continue improving course and administrative outcomes

## What the Future Holds

- Assess and improve the integrity of education sessions
- **Explore campus relationships** to increase collaboration and cross-promotion
- **Conduct program research** with Nutrition graduate students
- Navigate the post-pandemic landscape
- **Continue supporting the needs of a diverse student population** through an inclusive, culturally-aware, peer nutrition education program

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## Contact Information

Suzanne Elizondo, MS, RDN  
selizon3@calstatela.edu

5151 State University Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90032